

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5014

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 1729

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NZ, SN

SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TALBOYS' VISIT TO
SINGAPORE

1. NEW ZEALAND HIGH COMMISSIONER ROGER PEREN FILLED ME IN YES-
TERDAY ON HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW ZEALAND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TALBOYS'
VISIT TO SINGAPORE. ACCORDING TO PEREN, AFTER REVIEWING POST-
VIETNAM DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REGION, PRIME MINISTER LEE AND
OTHER SENIOR SINGAPORE OFFICIALS TOOK MUCH THE SAME LINE WITH
TALBOYS AS THEY HAVE TAKEN WITH OTHER HIGH-LEVEL VISITORS
RECENTLY ON SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION IN THAILAND IN LIGHT OF
WHAT APPEARS TO BE A CONTINUING VIETNAMESE THREAT. SINGAPOREANS
(AND PARTICULARLY PRIME MINISTER LEE) THEN SPOKE OF INTENTION
ON PART OF ALL ASEAN MEMBERS TO GET TOGETHER FOLLOWING THAI
ELECTIONS TO DISCUSS WAYS TO BRING PRESSURE JOINTLY ON HANOI TO
STOP INTERFERING IN THAILAND. PLAN WAS FOR ASEAN COUNTRIES TO
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GET THEIR FRIENDS, US, UK, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, PLUS THE

EEC COUNTRIES AND JAPAN- TO TELL HANOI IN CONCERT THAT IF VIETNAM DID NOT CEASE THIS INTERFERENCE, ALL THE OTHERS WOULD SEVER ECONOMIC TIES WITH VIETNAM AND THUS LEAVE IT ENTIRELY DEPENDENT FOR DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE ON THE USSR, CHINA, AND EASTERN EUROPE. SINGAPOREANS ESTIMATED THAT WHILE HANOI COULD NO DOUBT GET ALONG UNDER SUCH A SITUATION, IT WOULD NOT WISH TO BE TIED ENTIRELY TO THAT PART OF THE WORLD FOR AID, NOR, AS IT WAS PUT TO TALBOYS, LEFT DEPENDENT ON AN UMBILICAL CORD THAT STRETCHED ALL THE WAY BACK TO MOSCOW.

2. A GREAT DEAL WAS ALSO SAID BY THE SINGAPOREANS ON NEED FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE ASEAN GROUP OF NATIONS. TALBOYS AGREED WITH LEE AND HIS COLLEAGUES ON THIS NEED, BUT COULD NOT BE VERY FORTHCOMING CONCERNING NEW ZEALAND'S ROLE IN LIGHT OF COUNTRY'S PRESENT STRAITENED ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES.

3. ON QUESTION OF NEW ZEALAND TROOP PRESENT IN SINGAPORE, PEREN SAID SINGAPOREANS TOOK LINE THAT NEW ZEALAND' FORCES HAD BEEN A

STABILIZING FACTOR IN THE REGION AT A TIME WHEN IT WAS NEEDED, FOR WHICH SINGAPORE WAS VERY GRATEFUL. HOWEVER, NEED FOR NEW ZEALAND'S CONTRIBUTION NOW APPEARED TO BE PAST, AND WHILE SINGAPORE WAS NOT SETTING ANY PARTICULAR TIME FRAME FOR WITHDRAWAL OF NEW ZEALAND FORCES, THE GOS WOULD UNDERSTAND IF NEW ZEALAND WISHES TO BRING THEM HOME. SINGAPORE ALSO UNDERSTOOD AS WELL THAT FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS MADE IT DIFFICULT TO MOVE NEW ZEALAND CONTINGENT OUT IMMEDIATELY, AND, AS HAS BEEN NOTED, WAS PREPARED TO ALLOW NEW ZEALAN MILITARY PRESENCE UNTIL IT WAS CONVENIENT FOR IT TO BE WITHDRAWN.

4. PEREN REMARKED THAT AS SINGAPORE HAD PUT IT, RETENTION OF NEW ZEALAND TROOPS IN SINGAPORE IN EFFECT BECAME A TREASURY QUESTION RATHER THAN A FOREIGN POLICY MATTER. THERE WAS IN CONSEQUENCE A FEELING IN SOME QUARTERS IN NEW ZEALAND THAT IF TROOPS WERE TO BE WITHDRAWN, THEY SHOULD NOT GO OUT UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES BUT RATHER AS A CONSCIOUS DECISION, EVEN IF THIS MEANT SOME PROBLEMS AT HOME IN RELOCATING TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILITES. PEREN "GUESSED" THAT WITHDRAWAL WOULD TAKE PLACE
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BY 1978. HOWEVER, HE ADDED, THE SITUATION COULD ALWAYS CHANGE IN THE INTERVENING TIME.

5. ATMOSPHERICS OF MEETINGS BETWEEN SINGAPOREANS AND TALBOYS WERE EXCELLENT. MILITARY COOPERATION WILL CONTINUE, AND CHIEF OF MINISTRY OF DEFENSE GENERAL STAFF WINSTON CHOO HAS JUST RETURNED FROM VISIT TO NEW ZEALAND TO INSPECT TRAINING FACILITIES WHICH SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES WILL

BE PERMITTED TO USE.
HOLDRIDGE

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